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Written on NOVEMBER 20, 2014 AT 6:00 AM by SVANDERWERFF

Navy Medicine's War on King Tobacco, Part I

Filed under NAVY HISTORY, U.S. NAVY

(ONE COMMENT)

By **André B. Sobocinski, BUMED Historian**



Tucked away in the Naval History and Heritage Command's photographic archive is the image above dated 1944 showing an almost endless human chain of Sailors carrying boxes of *Lucky Strike* cigarettes onto the USS *Missouri's* forward main deck. The caption reads: "An average of five cases of cigarettes is smoked during a tour at sea."

From smoke-lamps to chewing boards to cigarette rations there is no denying that tobacco has been a part of Navy history from the very beginning. Through the ebbs and flows of wars and peace, aboard ship and ashore, cigarettes have been everything from that "quick fix" stress relief to a reason to take a break. In the "Age of Sail," tobacco was a means of acceptance into the naval fraternity. An editorial in *The Analectic Magazine* published in 1816, advised that all young officers needed



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[December 2014 \(17\)](#)

[November 2014 \(11\)](#)

[October 2014 \(15\)](#)

to learn to chew tobacco and to show others that they were “master of this indispensable accomplishment.” The author writing under the *nom-de-plume* “Old Lieutenant” would go on to advise that they needed to “take special care to spit in the most conspicuous manner.”(1) There’s little doubt the resulting shipboard puddles of tobacco would have predated smoking and tobacco chewing as recognized health hazards in the Navy.

As the concept of public health and disease prevention was taking form across the globe in the 1870s, we begin to see Navy physicians looking at tobacco use as a viable threat to one’s health. In an 1873 report, Navy Surgeon A.A. Hoehling remarked that tobacco usage aboard USS *Monongahela* was excessive and attributed it to cases of gastric disturbances (i.e., “eructions and emesis”). Hoehling noted that crewmembers averaged three pounds of tobacco monthly.(2)



In the 1870s and 1880s, Medical Director Albert Gihon, USN, a noted sanitary reformer of the day, became a vocal opponent of tobacco use.

In the 1870s and 1880s, Medical Director Albert Gihon, USN, a noted sanitary reformer of the day, became a vocal opponent of tobacco use. While serving as medical officer at the Naval Academy, Gihon called tobacco the most “important matter in the health history” of the midshipmen and urged its strict enforcement.(3) Gihon could be considered something of a “tobacco moralist” who connected its use with self-destructive behaviors like alcohol abuse, and “uncontrolled” sexual proclivities.(4)

By the early twentieth century, tobacco was on the rise in Navy and the statistics were staggering. In 1907, Navy Surgeon O.H. Norton reported that a three-month supply of tobacco aboard USS *Missouri* consisted of 1,500 books of cigarette papers, 1,200 pounds of smoking tobacco, as well as 37,000 Navy-issued cigarettes—and this was for a complement of just 700 Sailors and Marines!(5) In the very same year, Navy Surgeon General Presley Rixey called for a ban on smoking for all Sailors under the age

of 21. Presaging the health risks of tobacco, Rixey said the prohibition of smoking would minimize daily visits to the sick bay and “enhance the general efficiency of service.”(6) Rixey would place tobacco use in the same category as “alcohol indulgence” and the ever-pernicious “cocaine habit.”(7)

Endnotes:

(1) Old Lieutenant. “To the Young Officers of the American Navy.” *The Analectic Magazine*; Oct 1816, 8, pp341-342.

(2) Hoehling, A.A. *Hygienic and Medical Reports by Medical Officers of the U.S. Navy*. Washington, DC: GPO, 1874. p315.

(3) Gihon, Albert L. Medical report of the Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD. *Annual Report of the Surgeon General of the U.S. Navy*. Washington, DC: GPO 1879. pp 134-138.

(4) Gihon, Albert. “A Naval Surgeon on Tobacco and Boys.” *Christian Advocate*; June 9,

September 2014 (20)
August 2014 (14)
July 2014 (13)
June 2014 (8)
May 2014 (11)
April 2014 (9)
March 2014 (14)
February 2014 (7)
January 2014 (7)
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August 2011 (16)
July 2011 (10)

1881; 56. p14.

(5) Norton, O.D. “Notes on Navy Rations.” *Annual Report of the Surgeon General of the U.S. Navy*, 1907. p102.

(6) Kress, D.H. “A Puff of Smoke: Is the cigarette in opium's class.” *Herald of Gospel Liberty*; Aug 12, 1915; 107, 32. p1008.

(7) Rixey, Presley. “Cigarette Habits aboard Men-of-War.” *Annual Report of the Surgeon General of the U.S. Navy*, 1908. Page 141.

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Thank you for this excellent & thoughtful post, so full of ideas that I have printed it out so i can read again & your post motivated me.

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Written on NOVEMBER 24, 2014 AT 6:00 AM by SVANDERWERFF

Navy Medicine’s War on King Tobacco, Part II

Filed under [FLEET AND THE FLEET MARINE FORCE](#) [FORCE HEALTH AND SAFETY](#) [HEATH](#) (ONE COMMENT)

By **André B. Sobocinski, BUMED Historian**



At the end of the Second World War, when the Armed Forces began rationing tobacco at military establishments, a ration card could earn you six packs of cigarettes, 24 cigars or four ounces of tobacco weekly.

It is ironic that in an era where chewing gum was barred aboard Navy ships, chewing tobacco was flourishing.

In 1911, the Navy Paymaster-General established a special “Chewing Board” comprised of enlisted Sailors who would personally test the sample plugs of tobacco submitted by the fifty prospective vendors.

Any doubts that King Tobacco was a patriot would be silenced in the world wars. During the “Great War,” tobacco was called “indispensable” to service personnel by General John Pershing and tobacco rations were issued to every Sailor, Soldier and Marine.(1) In World War II, packets of cigarettes were sold at military stores tax-free for just a nickel and distributed free to troops overseas.(2) At the end




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[December 2014 \(17\)](#)

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of the Second World War, when the Armed Forces began rationing tobacco at military establishments, a ration card could earn you six packs of cigarettes, 24 cigars or four ounces of tobacco weekly. Even German and Japanese war prisoners were allocated smokeless tobacco.(3, 4)



Any doubts that King Tobacco was a patriot would be silenced in the world wars

Military publications from the 1940s and 1950s (e.g., *Our Navy*) are chock full of cigarette ads championing Camels, Chesterfields, and Lucky Strike cigarettes and glorifying their “mildness” and “flavor.” Wartime films of the era go far to put a heroic face behind every cigarette.

The concept of tobacco cessation in the military came into its own in the 1960s. Only days after U.S. Surgeon General Luther Terry’s groundbreaking report condemning smoking (January 11, 1964), the Navy initiated its first anti-tobacco policy. On January 14, 1964, Navy Surgeon General Rear Adm. Edward Kenney stated that the Navy would no longer be involved promoting “smoking or imply an official endorsement of the alleged psychological or social merits of cigarette smoking.”(5) Kenney would also call for the cessation of cigarettes in Navy and Marine Corps rations.(6) By the end of

January 1964, the Department of Defense prohibited the distribution of cigarettes as gifts at all military hospitals. (7)

During 1964, we see an early anti-smoking cessation study aboard submarines. As part of “Operation No Smoke,” 125 Navy officers and enlisted personnel aboard the Polaris submarine USS *Nathan Hale* go three-months without cigarettes. This voluntary (and “unofficial”) effort lead by Cmdr. Robert Thompson, Medical Corps, USN and Chief Hospital Corpsman Gene Jarvala was considered a means of reducing the operating costs of submarines. Thompson believed the that smokeless environment would “reduce” the need of “aerosols” and thus require “less use of electrostatic precipitators” for purification. Some 46 years later, smoking would officially be banned aboard Navy submarines.(8)



On January 14, 1964, Navy Surgeon General Rear Adm. Edward Kenney stated that the Navy would no longer be involved promoting “smoking or imply an official endorsement of the alleged psychological or social merits of cigarette smoking.

Endnotes:

- (1) Moyer, David. *The Tobacco Reference Guide*. (www.tobaccoprogram.org)
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) “Outlook Better but Services to Ration Fags.” *The Washington Post*; May 17, 1945; p5
- (4) “Navy Ends Tobacco Rationing.” *The New York Times*; August 22, 1945; p14.
- (5) RADM Edward Kenney Memorandum for Secretary of the Navy, dated January 14, 1964.

September 2014 (20)
August 2014 (14)
July 2014 (13)
June 2014 (8)
May 2014 (11)
April 2014 (9)
March 2014 (14)
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January 2014 (7)
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December 2011 (13)
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July 2011 (10)

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- (6) Ibid.
- (7) “Pentagon to Ban Cigaret [sic] Gifts.” *Chicago Tribune*, Jan 31, 1964. p5.
- (8) Landry, John. “‘Operation No Smoke.’ Polaris Sub crew aims to kick the tobacco habit with three-month test of lobeline sulphate and will power.” *The Hartford Courant*; March 29, 1964.

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Written on NOVEMBER 25, 2014 AT 6:00 AM by SVANDERWERFF

Navy Medicine’s War on King Tobacco, Part III

Filed under [COMMUNITY SUPPORT](#) [FAMILIES](#) [FORCE HEALTH AND SAFETY](#)

(ONE COMMENT)

By **André B. Sobocinski, BUMED Historian**



In January 1987, Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton, Calif. became the first “smoke-free” military hospital in the United States.

At the end of the 1970s, Secretary of Health Education, and Welfare Joseph Califano, Jr. famously called tobacco “Public Enemy No. 1.”(1)

Following Califano’s lead, the Navy Medical Department took the fight against King Tobacco to its hospitals at decade’s end. Surgeon General Vice Adm. Willard Arentzen, called all healthcare professionals who smoked “derelict” from their duties and they needed to lead the fight against tobacco by example.(2) In a “Dear Doctor” letter to all naval hospital commanding officers dated September 1977, Arentzen wrote, “As health care professionals we must encourage programs to decrease morbidity and premature mortality, including decreasing tobacco smoking.” (3)

The very same year was marked by DoD’s



Surgeon General Vice Adm. Willard Arentzen, called all healthcare professionals who smoked “derelict” from

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[December 2014 \(17\)](#)

[November 2014 \(11\)](#)

[October 2014 \(15\)](#)

their duties and they needed to lead the fight against tobacco by example.

first policy on reducing smoking in the workplace and, also, the development of an anti-smoking program targeting high-risk groups (i.e., chronic bronchitis, asthmatics, and asbestos workers) (4). Nationally, the American Cancer Association inaugurated its first “Great American Smokeout” campaign, an event the Navy and Marine Corps has been part of ever since.(5)



By the 1980s, it was clear that tobacco use was a bigger problem for the Armed Services than the greater civilian population. A 1983 Department of Defense survey found that 56 percent of males and 48 percent of women in the military smoked; this compared with 36 percent of males and 29 percent of females in the greater civilian population.(6) Four years later, a DoD survey found that 44 percent of all Navy personnel smoked compared to 29 percent of all civilian adults.(7)

Despite these statistics, progress was being made against King Tobacco. In January 1987, Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton, Calif. became the first “smoke-free” military hospital in the United States.

(8) Two years later tobacco was banned in all Navy and Marine healthcare facilities; and seven years later the Department of Defense Instruction 1010.15 prohibited smoking in all DoD workplaces. In 1994, the Pentagon would make history as the largest smoke-free office building in the world.(9)

Even though King Tobacco’s dominion continues to be chipped away through increasingly restrictive tobacco control policies and healthcare promotions, his presence remains. Today it is estimated that 20 percent of military personnel smoke and 13 percent use smokeless tobacco. Tobacco-related illnesses in the military are estimated to cost \$1.6 million annually. (10)

Endnotes:

(1) Moyer, David. *The Tobacco Reference Guide*. (www.tobaccoprogram.org)

(2) “Navy MDs Who Smoke Shouldn’t.” *U.S. Medicine*, October 15, 1977.

(3) Arentzen, Willard. “Dear Doctor,” September 21, 1977. BUMED Archives.

(4) DoD Instruction 6015.18. “Smoking in DoD Occupied Buildings and Facilities,” dated August 18, 1977.

(5) “History of the Great American Smokeout.” (www.cancer.org)

(6) Conway, Terry and T.A. Cronan. “Smoking and Physical Fitness Among Navy Shipboard Personnel.” NHRC Report No. 86-33. 1986.

(7) Conway, Terry, Suzanne Hurtado, and Susan Woodruff. “Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Programs in the U.S. Navy.” *Public Health Reports*. January-February 1993, Vol. 108, No. 1.

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August 2014 (14)
July 2014 (13)
June 2014 (8)
May 2014 (11)
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March 2014 (14)
February 2014 (7)
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December 2013 (7)
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December 2011 (13)
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(9) DoD Instruction 1010.15 “Smoke-Free DoD Workplace.” Dated March 7, 1994.

(10)Shane, Leo. Senate panel proposes ending tobacco discounts on bases. Air Force Times. August 4, 2014. p6

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